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ABOUT THIS INTERVIEW:

John Lennon and Paul McCartney spoke with Flip Magazine for an exclusive interview that was published in Flip's May 1966 issue. John discusses his opinions of other artists performing Lennon/McCartney songs, while Paul mentions his interest in writing a song about Penny Lane based on inspiration from a song by The Animals.

During the time of this interview, the Beatles were in the midst of the recording sessions that would produce the album, 'Revolver.'

- Jay Spangler,
www.beatlesinterviews.org

"If I thought I'd got to go through the rest of my life being pointed and stared at-- I'd give up The Beatles now. It's only the thought that one day it will all come to an end and which keeps me going."

That was just one of the frank and controversial comments which came from John Lennon during an exclusive three and a half hour interview I had with him and Paul in the Beatles dressing room at the Birmingham studios prior to the screening of 'The Music Of Lennon and McCartney'.

An hour previously I had been just one of a horde of reporters milling around the press reception hall with a dozen assorted models attired in rubber suits, negligees and bunny outfits (They appear in Peter and Gordon's sequence in the show) before a scale model of the studio set.

Although Paul had not seen me for some months, he singled me out at the reception and courteously invited me back to a private luncheon with himself, Henry Mancini, John and producer Johnny Hamp. During the meal, John expressed some disappointment that certain artists were not able to appear on the show. "You can't expect people to come over at a moments notice but I would have liked big names like Ella, Peggy Lee and Keely Smith to have appeared on the show," said John. "I'm not knocked out with the way Keely Smith did our numbers on her LP but she would have been a great name for the show."

Later in the privacy of their dressing room with only road manager Malcolm Evans, John, Paul, and myself present there were some vigourous views revealed about just who can sing and play Beatle music and do it justice. "There are only about 100 people in the world who understand our music," said John. "George, Ringo, and a few friends around the world. Some of the artists who recorded our numbers have no idea how to interpret them. Keely Smith added nothing to our compositions but a couple trumpets. I loathed Matt Monro's version of 'Yesterday' and liked Marianne Faithfull's. I wanted Richard Anthony on this show but he was busy having car crashes in France or something. We dig the way Esther Phillips sang 'And I Love Him' and Henry's orchestration of 'If I Fell' and that's why they are here. When Paul and I write a song we try and take hold of something we believe in-- a truth. We can never communicate 100 per cent of what we feel but if we can convey just a fraction we have achieved something. We try to give people a feeling-- they don't have to understand the music if they can just feel the emotion. This is half the reason the fans don't understand but they experience what we are trying to tell them."

"Lack of feeling in an emotional sense is responsible for the way some singers do our songs. They don't understand and are too old to grasp the feeling. Beatles are really the only people who can play Beatle music."

Just what kind of music do the music makers themselves dig? Paul was soon off on what kind of music he likes.

"Dylan is a fantastic composer," said Paul. "At first I didn't understand. I used to lose his songs in the middle but then I realized it didn't matter. You can get hung up on just two words of a Dylan lyric. 'Jealous Monk' or 'magic swirling ship' are examples of the fantastic word combinations he uses. I could never write like that and I envy him. He is a poet."

"I like some of the things the Animals try to do like the song Eric

Burdon wrote about places in Newcastle on the flip of one of their hits. I still want to write a song about the places in Liverpool where I was brought up. Places like The Docker's Umbrella which is a long tunnel through which the dockers go to work on Merseyside, and Penny Lane near my old home."

"The one thing I can't understand is the protest songs like 'Eve of Destruction' that was absolute rubbish. Dylan's 'Masters of War' or 'God On Our Side' are OK because they say things in an original manner but P.F Sloan is too much."

John is very conscious of the Beatles musical progression and he explained to me how he would sit down in his house at Weybridge, put all their LPs in chronological order on his stereo gram and study the improving pattern of sound.

"I can hear that we've progressed from this," he used his hand to indicate a level, "To this" and raised it again. "But do y'know I never get to hear them all the way through. Someone always turns up and there I am sitting like an idiot in the front room listening to my own music. I'm too embarassed to leave it on."

At this stage of the interview, things become enlivened by the appearence of our top DJ Jimmy Savilla (who just happened to be around) who sat down on a chair opposite. Jim, who has blonde shoulder length hair, was wearing blue denims embossed with an enormous silver buckle and white leather boots. An imposing sight!

"Something's wrong with you," smiled John. "You're not smoking." Jimmy explained that George had recently complained about his self-made smog in the Beatles dressing room.

"That was George," declared John, and Jim promptly lit up an enormous cigar and disappeared behind his smoke screen. Recording manager George Martin entered upon the scene and for some reason that escapes me began in true life confessions manner to tell us about his Uncle who was a crook.

"I had an uncle who looked after sheep," said Paul. "He was a shepherd's crook." This pun was greeted with a short but reverent silence which was finally broken by Malcolm who declared piously, "Dat's very funny (significant pause)...boss!"

The inevitable subject of Elvis Presley was brought up by Jimmy who is his most ardent fan, and declared on a trip to Moscow recently the 10 by 8 glossies which he took with him of Elvis were like gold dust over there.

"We saw enough of him on our last trip to realize that he is anything but stupid," declared John. "I asked him if he had any new ideas for his films and he and Colonel Tom explained that the only time that they had departed from the 'kinda cowboy meets cowgirl theme' that they lost money. There's only one thing wrong with Elvis," said John. "He's a bit square that's all."

I tackled John about the subject of the Liverpool Cavern Club which was in danger of being closed down. It was this club where the Beatles blasted off from to International fame.

"Someone came up to me the other day and asked what I had done to save the club that made us," retorted John. "I replied that we made the club-- the club did not make us." John later revealed that he is working on his next book. "I just sit down in the morning and work right through the day without a stop," said John. "Food just appears in front of me and I eat it-- time means nothing to me while I'm working."

"Someone sent a copy of my book "Spainiard in the Works" back to me the other day. They complained I used bad language in the book. I returned the book to the agents with instructions to re-sell it.

We've often heard from reporters what they thought about The Beatles, but I'd never seen written what the Beatles thought about reporters. I asked John for his views.

"You can spot the good ones even in a crowded reception hall," said John. "You'll be saying something which no one else is writing down but just one or two reporters. I've seen enough journalists to recognize those who know what we're all about."

"Better tell him he's in' or you'll hurt his feelings," added Paul nodding at me.

"He wouldn't be here if he wasn't," retorted John.

Other subjects covered during the course of the afternoon comprised of Marxism, Royality, Hairdressers, Eastern Philosophy, Cars, Clothes and why John was wearing a T-Shirt labelled 'Lord John'.

The question of the musical which J and P want to write arose as I was about to leave. Paul commented sadly upon the scheme.

"I think we are resigned to the fact that this can not come about until The Beatles are disbanded. Then and only then will we have time to work on compositions."

When will The Beatles retire as a group? It could be next week because with this group the unexpected is always to be expected.

Source: Transcribed by www.beatlesinterviews.org from original magazine issue

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